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13 March 1958

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CENTRAL

INTELLIGENCE

BULLETIN



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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

13 March 1958

DAILY BRIEF

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

*Indonesia (as of 0100 EST 13 March): Indonesian government forces which captured the Central Sumatran oil center of Pakanbaru are moving westward along the highway leading to the dissident strongholds of Bukittinggi and Padang. They are meeting some resistance from small dissident units which have managed to regroup several miles outside Pakanbaru.

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(Map)

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Lebanon: Prime Minister Suh's resignation on 12 March is apparently a maneuver designed to enable him to reshuffle his cabinet. Lebanese President Chamoun is particularly anxious that elements be brought into the government which would provide additional support for his second-term aspirations. Foreign Minister Malik, who is unpopular and a focal point for criticism, may be dropped; but the government's orientation is likely to remain unchanged. [redacted]

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III. THE WEST

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France-Tunisia: Premier Gaillard has specified that Tunisia must make moves to re-establish "normal relations" as the minimum position acceptable to his cabinet. He agreed that regrouping and subsequent evacuation of some French troops might occur simultaneously with Tunisian fulfillment of French conditions. Ultranationalists in the French cabinet and parliament can be expected, however, to continue insisting on an even tougher French position. Gaillard's stipulations on restoring relations and Paris' adamant stand on not giving up Bizerte are probably unacceptable to Bourguiba.

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Bolivia: The political struggle between President Siles and leftist labor leader Juan Lechin has been intensified by efforts of Lechin's supporters to seize physical control of the Bolivian mining area. Meanwhile, Siles has ordered the arrest and expulsion from Bolivia of the principal Trotskyite and Communist leaders linked with Lechin.

*Cuba: President Batista's 45-day suspension of constitutional guarantees on 12 March could provoke a serious threat to his regime and will make difficult the holding of free elections by 1 June.

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DAILY BRIEF

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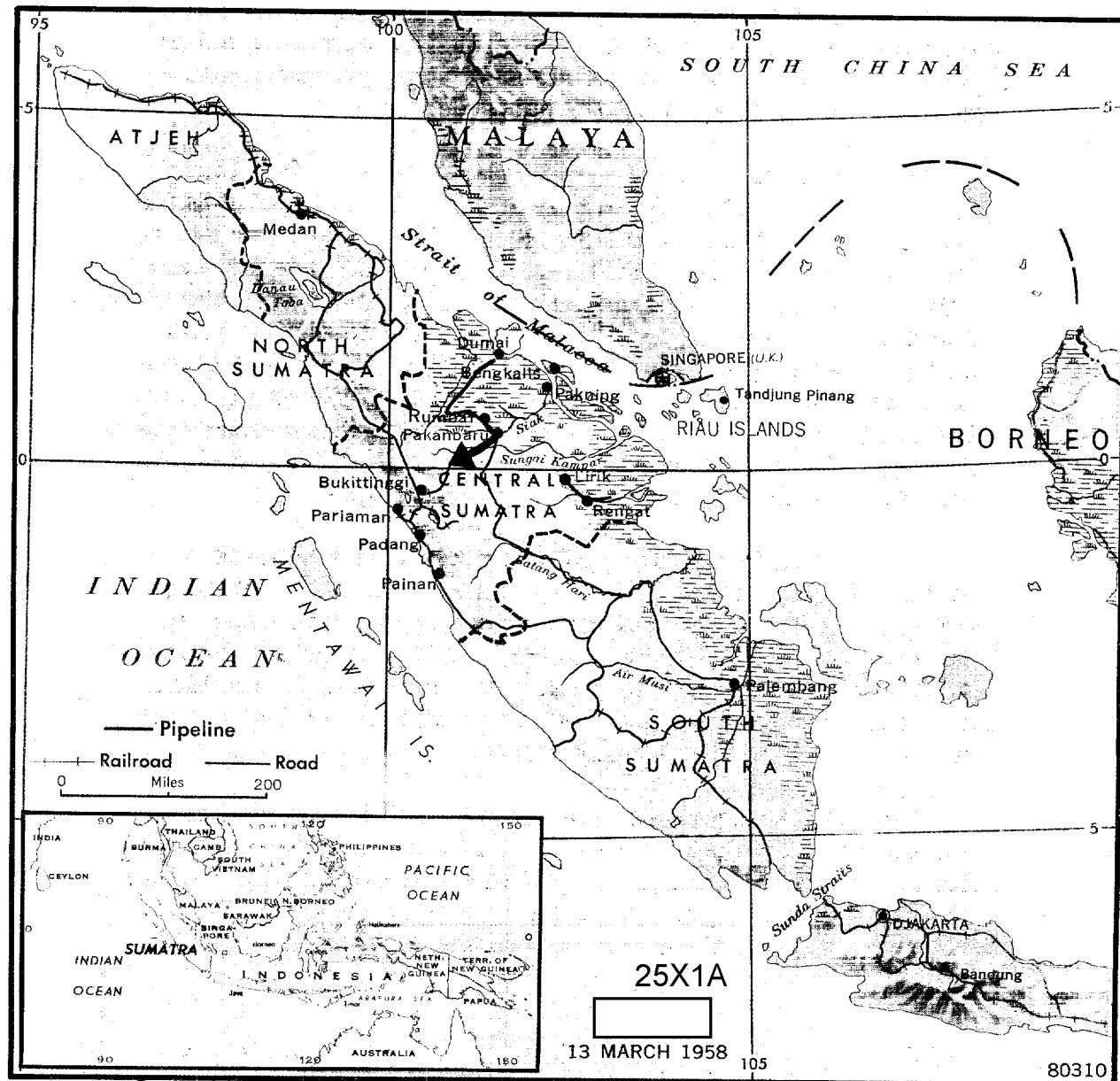
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II. ASIA-AFRICA

Djakarta Pressing Military Campaign in Central Sumatra

Indonesian government forces which captured the Central Sumatran oil center of Pakanbaru on 12 March have begun to move westward along the highway leading to the dissident strongholds of Bukittinggi and Padang. [redacted]

25X1C [redacted] some 300 Djakarta troops were attacking two dissident companies which were defending a junction nine miles outside the city.

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At least a part of the main government force of three to four battalions coming up the Siak River and overland from Dumai has probably arrived in Pakanbaru. These units can be expected to give impetus to the westward drive.

Meanwhile, the shelling of Padang by two navy corvettes, accompanied by orders to all ships in the harbor to leave by 1000 on 13 March, may be the prelude to an amphibious attack in that area. According to a military official in Djakarta, 3 1/2 battalions as well as the navy's 900-man marine corps are available for this operation.

In Djakarta, the prospects of any agreement between President Sukarno and former vice president Hatta appear to have all but vanished. Hatta has indicated that there is no basis for compromise as long as force is being used against the dissidents, and there is some reason to believe that he may soon be taken into "protective custody" by the military.

Sukarno is on an "inspection" trip of Java and East Indonesia calling for support of the military campaign against the dissidents. His trip is to be climaxed on 16 March with an address to a mass meeting in Bandung. [redacted]

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III. THE WEST

Gaillard's Terms for Tunisia Probably Unacceptable

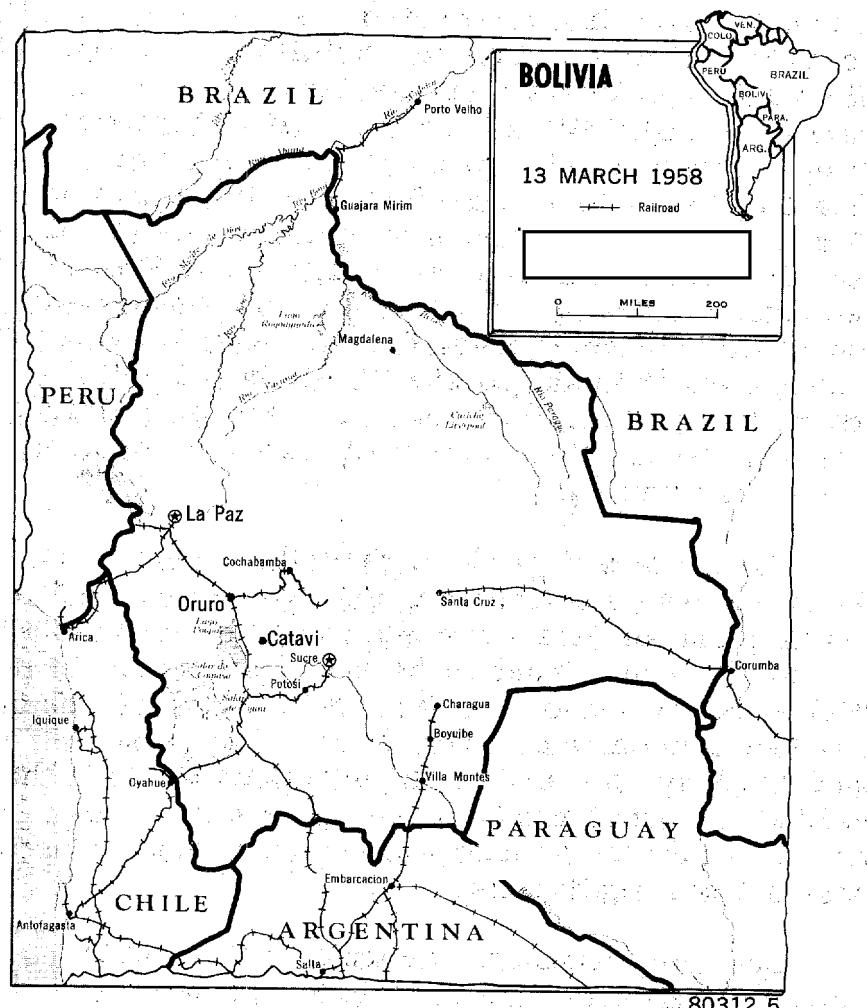
French Premier Gaillard appears willing to modify several important details of the minimum conditions his cabinet says Tunisia must satisfy before "normal relations" with France can be re-established. In talks with US and UK good offices representatives, he agreed that the regrouping at Bizerte of four or five thousand French troops now stationed "around Tunis" could occur "simultaneously" with the return of French civilians to their Tunisian domiciles, return of French consuls to their posts, and restoration of liberty of circulation for French troops. He also stated categorically that the regrouped troops would be evacuated from Tunisia, but adamantly rejected "any formula which would provoke the departure of the French from Bizerte." Gaillard also indicated his willingness to separate the questions of neutral control of the airfields and of the frontier.

Gaillard's willingness to relax the cabinet's "minimum" demands may be motivated partly by a recommendation reportedly made by the French commander in Tunisia in favor of evacuation of ground forces and abandonment of the airfields, and by evidence that many French civilians in Tunisia see Bourguiba as their best hope of protecting their status and property. Nevertheless, ultranationalists in the French cabinet and parliament can be expected to continue insisting on an even stiffer French position which may hamstring the good offices negotiations.

Gaillard's demands, particularly the insistence on remaining at Bizerte, are unlikely to be readily accepted by Bourguiba, who continues to demand a substantial evacuation by 20 March, the anniversary of Tunisia's independence.

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Civil War Threatens in Bolivia

Strikes begun on 11 March in the Bolivian mines by Communist and Trotskyite followers of leftist labor leader Juan Lechin will seriously test the ability of President Siles Zuazo to retain control of the government. With the pro- and anti-government forces about equally divided in the mining areas, Siles has thrown a protective cordon of militia and police around the key city of Oruro and sent a force of 100 miners into the city to defend it against attack. Another such cordon is reported to be trying to isolate the town of Catavi, where the Lechin forces are concentrated.

In La Paz, Siles has reportedly ordered the arrest and expulsion of certain Trotskyite and orthodox Communist leaders who were linked with Juan Lechin. The President's ability to implement these orders, however, will depend on his success in ousting the pro-Lechin chief of secret police, whose dismissal was reported on 10 March although he was subsequently granted permission "to stay on for a few days."

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Cuban Government Suspends Constitutional Guarantees

Cuban President Batista's 45-day suspension of constitutional guarantees on 12 March--the seventh such suspension since January 1957--may result in the most serious threat to the government since the abortive naval uprising at Cienfuegos last September. Coming at a time when the nation is preparing for general elections on 1 June, the suspension may result in the withdrawal of opposition parties from the campaign and will certainly mock Batista's assurances that he will hold free elections.

Prime Minister Emilio Nunez Portuondo resigned immediately after guarantees were suspended; the other ministers, who resigned briefly, were reappointed under the premiership of former Foreign Minister Gonzalo Guell.

There was no apparent reason for Batista's decision to suspend constitutional guarantees, and his action may be considered a tactical error. Rebel leader Fidel Castro's rejection of church mediation on 11 March had placed Batista in a more advantageous position since he had at least nominally supported the Church's proposal for a peaceful solution of Cuba's political problems.

If adverse reaction to the suspension becomes widespread, it is conceivable that the armed forces, in which dissatisfaction with Batista has become more pronounced lately, might move to take control of the situation. It is also possible that Fidel Castro might take advantage of the situation to call for a general strike, which he had planned before the end of March, and to intensify his campaign to oust Batista by force.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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DAILY BRIEF

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I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

Lebanon: Prime Minister Sulh's resignation on 12 March is apparently a maneuver designed to enable him to reshuffle his cabinet. Lebanese President Chamoun is particularly anxious that elements be brought into the government which would provide additional support for his second-term aspirations. Foreign Minister Malik, who is unpopular and a focal point for criticism, may be dropped; but the government's orientation is likely to remain unchanged.

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*Cuba: President Batista's 45-day suspension of constitutional guarantees on 12 March could provoke a serious threat to his regime and will make difficult the holding of free elections by 1 June.

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